10: d'Orleans--277 [3] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 202, 212, 533, 563, 802 Ethnic subgroups

"From their [LSS: Kha boatmen, in the service of a Laotian] own account, they have no special songs, but they use the Laotian music.

Writing is unknown to them; but they keep their accounts, or send their messages by means of small pieces of bamboo, marked with notches which are made at closer or longer intervals according to the signification that has been arranged. This is like our bakers' sticks. (1)

1. M. Harmand has found amongst the peoples of the south of Indo-China the same method of correspondence that Father Crabouillet discovered amongst the Lolos of Setchoun. (Cf. 'Note on the Writing of the Indo-Chinese Khas,' by M. P. Lefèvre-Pontalis, L'Anthropologie, Mars-Avril, 1892.) "

15: Benedict--388-389 L-5 (no date) 1947 Laotians
116, 171, 212, 538

"The Lao script was derived from Khmer writing, probably in the thirteenth century. It is a simpler archaic version of Siamese writing, which is also of Khmer (and ultimately Indian) origin. The White Tai and Black Tai of Tonkin employ similar alphabets, possibly later derivatives of the Lao alphabet. Remarkably enough, the White Tai of Nghê-an, under Annamese influence, write this script in vertical lines, from right to left, as in Chinese! Lao literature naturally has much in common with Khmer literature, as described above, and bears the same deep imprint of Buddhist India. Native Lao (Thai) features are apparent in the more folkloristic aspects of the literature, however, and the poetic forms are [389] much freer than those of Khmer."

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144
197

2. The Khas (2) or descendants of the prehistoric aborigines.

(2) In Laos the word Kha means slave, individual of inferior and scornful condition, or else one who lives as a savage. The name, which was applied by the last invaders of Laos to the races which had preceded them there, has the same meaning as Moï in Annamite, Stieng or Peunong in Cambodian and Orang Oulou in Malay.

They mixed with newcomers to form a large variety of secondary tribes which, despite their common origin, differ from one another in type, language, dialect or idiom, mores, customs, dress, etc.

771
212

The Khas have no form of writing, except for the Khouènes and the Khmous who have been partly converted to Buddhism while their [127] fellows have clung to a crude fetishism in which belief in spirits (Phis) prevails.

641

A few of these tribes have not yet submitted to our domination and do not pay any taxes.

The principal Kha tribes in Laos are the following:

a) In northern Laos. (The names below should be followed by the word Khas.)

1. PURE KHAS

Khouènes-Khao.	Koussoungs.	Bos.	Kouangs.
Khouènes-Dam.	Bits.	Sapouans.	Saks.
Lemets.	Phèng-Mis.	Kasèngs.	Mouçeus.
Leups.	Sos.	Tiols.	Khmous.
Lawas.	Siengs-Di.	Alous.	
Khos.	Giois.	Ouxas.	
Khouis.	Hock-Roï.	Panas.	

2. KHAS MIXED WITH LAOTIANS, THAIS, LUS AND YOUNS OR IN THE COURSE OF CHANGE

Oks.	Sos.	Phongs.	Phou-Thuongs.
Youngs.	Soués.	Laos-Niôs.	Phou-Oks.
Phou-Phays.	Sèks.	Phou-Thengs.	

212 197

This is doubtless due to the use of the brush, which does not make it possible to draw characters as fine and as purely rounded as with a dry point, a wooden stylus, a pen or a pencil, which are the only instruments used to write the other varieties of the Thai language.

Phouthai, like Laotian, is written in characters, but these differ in number and in form. The vowels are intercalated between the consonants, or are placed like accents above the line when the consonant stands alone, or may even always be placed above in the case of some vowels. This way of understanding the use of vowels can also be found in certain primitive languages.

[101]

In the regions where Phouthai writing is used the influence of the proximity of Annam and China has clearly manifested itself, and the alphabet has become syllabic. Scholars are able to learn by heart a certain number of syllables in which consonants and vowels are joined to form a single character, but those who have not learned Laotian cannot distinguish between the vowels and consonants nor use them separately.

The Phouthais, who have the same basic spoken language as the Laotians but who have a different writing and religion, must either have separated from the primitive groupings before writing was created and have attained sufficient cohesion to create their own form of writing, or else must have learned it in a perfected state of development through some foreign current. It may also be said that when the Laotians adopted the Buddhist religion they lost their old Phouthai signs and took over those of the bonzes who had come to teach them the new faith. Then the brush was abandoned for the stylus and the point, which make it possible to write more rapidly and finely and to form a greater number of signs--these being necessary, moreover, to express and define the abstract ideas and subtle dogmas of the new religion.

[177 795]

[142] The Phouthai alphabet includes only twenty-three characters, almost all of which are syllabic.

212 194

The Siamese language. Of all the forms of the Thai language, Siamese, as we have seen, is the most complete and the most highly developed. Thus it will perhaps be of interest to give some notion, as rapidly as possible, of this language.

The alphabet is composed of forty-four letters which are divided into three classes, as follows:

11 letters on a rising tone, or high letters;
9 letters on a middle tone, or recto tono middle letters;

212
194

24 letters on a falling tone, or low letters.
These forty-four letters can be broken down into:
18 consonants;
5 vowels;
21 diphtongs.

The Siamese language has five tones:

1. Long recto tono and short recto tono;
2. Long circumflex tone, short circumflex tone and very short circumflex tone;
3. Long falling tone and short falling tone;
4. Long rising tone and short rising tone;
5. Long acute tone and short acute tone.

To represent these tones there are four accents which are placed above the syllables or vowels.

193

Nouns or substantives. The simple nouns are in large part monosyllabic. Only a few are polysyllabic. The compound nouns are formed of two words.

A large number of verbs and adjectives can be changed into substantives by means of a prefix. From the grammatical point of view, nouns do not have any gender or number. To distinguish between men and women a suffix is used which designates sex. In the case of animals, except for a few exceptions, the name is the same for the male and for the female. The male or female prefix is added to distinguish between them.

Numerals and numerical designations. Nouns do not have any number, and this is compensated for by adding expressions signifying [143] singular or plural, but which vary with each object. In French, for example, we would say "two kings, several leaders." In Siamese they say "kings, two persons; leaders, several persons."

These numerals are different, depending on whether it is a question of men, animals, plants or various objects.

For men, for example, there are three numerals. One applies to everybody, the second is used for God, the king, princes, priests and great men, and the third is used only for bonzes.

There are also thirty-five numerals which apply to animals, plants, fruit, material things, books, clothing, grain, flowers, stars, jewels, cloth, packages, string, thread, carts, weapons, etc.

Adjectives. Certain expressions may be construed either as adjectives or as substantives or verbs, depending on the construction of the sentence. A suffix after the noun forms a descriptive adjective,

193 while a prefix before the noun transforms it into a demonstrative adjective. The comparative is expressed by a suffix placed after the noun.

There are eleven expressions to indicate the superlative. They are used as prefixes or suffixes in accordance with fixed rules.

Personal pronouns. There are eleven pronouns for the first person which vary in accordance with the status of the speaker and the person being spoken to.

There are ten for the second person and eight for the third.

Possessive pronouns. There is no such pronoun in Siamese. It is replaced by the genitive of the person or animal which possesses.

Relative pronouns. They are in the number of three, and stand before the object which they modify.

Interrogative pronouns. They are five in number. When repeated they become relative or indefinite and signify, for example, whoever instead of who, whatever instead of what, etc.

Verbs. Verbs do not have conjugations, moods, tenses or persons. Like nouns, they are always invariable. Some semblance of conjugation may nevertheless be achieved by means of particles or auxiliary words. These words, in the number of eleven, change the [144] meaning of sentences by expressing an action or an idea, according as they stand before the verb or after.

Principal adverbs. There are seventy-eight principal adverbs. Moreover, certain nouns or adjectives take an adverbial form by means of seven particles which are placed after them.

Prepositions and conjunctions. There are twenty-eight main prepositions and twenty-five conjunctions (1).

[113]

(1) Pallegoix, Dictionnaire siamois-français-anglais, 1896.

212 194 The Lao or Laotian language. The Lao alphabet is composed of twenty-eight letters divided into fourteen simple or compound consonants and fourteen vowels or diphthongs. They are divided into three classes, as follows:

1. Six letters on a rising or aspirated tone;
2. Eight letters on a middle or recto tone;
3. Fourteen letters on a falling or low tone.

To obtain the grave, long grave, short, open and close tones, signs and accents are used. These may be placed above or below the consonant, or may be formed by joining certain vowels and

consonants. Vowels or diphthongs are also sometimes written before the consonant. 212 194

This system of accentuation is, however, not at all fixed, because of the lack of tonic accents. This is what explains the great number of synonyms, as far as spelling goes--synonyms which differ only in prononciation. It is therefore essential to know the meaning of the sentence in order to give it the necessary accentuation and the proper intonation.

It is easy to write, but reading it is fraught with difficulty. To be sure, the orthography is not very complicated, and after a certain time one can manage to write it fairly correctly.

The same is not true of Siamese, and the fixed rules of tonality which it has make it possible, when one has a firm grasp of them, to read all texts without understanding anything.

The Youn language. The Youn language which is in current usage in all of western Laos, [145] that is to say in the basin of the upper Ménam and in part of the Laotian Shan States, is Lao which has been modified graphically by the introduction of certain forms borrowed from the alphabetic signs of the Burmese language. There is no doubt but that it is a compound of the Thai language and that which was brought to Laos by the Pégouans and the Burmese and which underwent profound modifications on contact with Buddhism. [177]

What seems to lend credence to this hypothesis is that the Youn alphabet is used almost exclusively in all parts of Laos for the sacred books and manuscripts of the pagodas. It is a kind of transition between Pali, which is too little known and little suited to expressing the sounds of the Thai language, and this latter language itself which is regarded as too vulgar. A somewhat modified Youn alphabet was then created, and was reserved for religious writings, both texts and copies. A knowledge of this special alphabet is, in Laos, the mark of a superior degree of education. 212. 776

The Lu language. Like the preceding, the Lu language is complex and formed of the same elements. That is to say, it is due to the introduction of a Burmese graphic element into the already existing Thai element. In this way it has answered to new needs which resulted from the milieu and from social relations. 212 177

Thus the Lu language includes a certain number of Chinese, Kha and Burmese words which have been added to the original Thai mass.

The Lu alphabet includes twenty-six letters, twelve vowels and fourteen consonants.

584 their mutual sentiments and decide in complete freedom on the principle of their future union.

Natural inclinations are rarely opposed by parents, and so it is primarily out of form and a sentiment of respect that a young man, after reaching an agreement with his fiancée, sends an old man to convey his proposal to the parents of the future bride.

[554] On the other hand, since Laotian customs establish the size of the dowry which young men must, depending on their social status, [192] deliver to their in-laws, girls eligible for marriage encourage only those suitors who are in a position to provide such a dowry (1).

(1) The sum varies, for the lower and middle classes, between ten and 250 francs. But in the families of notables it may go as high, counting jewelry and gifts, as 1200 or 1500 francs.

When an agreement has been reached the fiancée's parents give a feast to which relatives, friends, neighbors and bonzes are invited. The latter then set a day and hour for celebrating the marriage, taking care to choose a propitious day.

585 On the appointed day the groom, accompanied by his friends and by musicians, goes to the house of his future wife's parents, to whom he delivers the sum agreed on as his dowry as well as the clothes, jewels and various gifts which he may care to add. As a sign of homage he also gives his in-laws wax candles and flowers, which are often accompanied by various foods, brandy, tobacco, etc.

The marriage contract is immediately drawn up in the presence of a mandarin and notables of the region. The act gives the names of the bride and groom, as well as those of their parents and the witnesses and magistrates present. The sum of the dowry, the jewels and other objects delivered by the groom to his future bride and her parents are carefully listed. Then after the document is signed by the young couple the authorities affix their seal to it and it is given to the girl's parents (2).

• [212] (2) When the bride or groom does not know how to write, his or her signature is replaced by a black or red thumbprint or by an outline of the joints of the index finger (generally of the left hand).

Tribal Tai

whole match, instead of keeping their legs rigid and remaining on the same line, the opponents turn constantly around a central point and raise each leg in turn, the knee bent. This exercise, in which all four limbs work at once and which requires a sure eye and rapid execution, is surely one of the most graceful in existence when it is performed with the facile ease and supreme elegance of the Lus.

"Lu dancing has that particular character of morbidness which one finds among most Mohammedan peoples and also in Spain. The men (for the men are the ones who dance) imprint on their feet only those movements which are indispensable for making the body pivot and facilitating slow, undulating movements by the hips, torso and arms. The dancers are accompanied by tom-toms and kettledrums, and they sigh out lingering, voluptuous chants which harmonize well with their movements. These are veritable harem dances, or such as dancing girls might perform." (Le Laos français.) [Lieutenant-colonel Tournier (Superior Resident in Laos), "Notice sur le Laos français," in Revue Indochinoise, Hanoi, 1900.]

We have already seen what the religion of the Lus is like, and need add only that their bonzes are highly respected and that the pagodas are much frequented by the children and young people. Thus the number of scholars is higher among the Lus than among the Laotians. Many women even know how to read and write.

The Lus do not cremate their dead, but bury them, even at a very shallow depth, after wrapping the bodies in a mat or a piece of cloth. The bonzes recite a few prayers over the grave when it has been filled, and in return for this service usually receive an object of some value which belonged to the deceased.

[250] The tombs are not kept up.

The Youns. The natives called Youns are Laotians who have settled on the right bank of the Mekong, in the basin of the Upper Menam and in the territories of Xieng-Hai, Xieng-Khong and Xieng-Sen. There are, however, Youns living in French Laos where they have mixed with the other Laotians. [Illustration alongside text here]

The Youns may be distinguished from their fellow Laotians by the extent to which they are tattooed. Whereas a Laotian will only be tattooed from the bend of the knee to the waist, a Youn will be tattooed from the calf of the leg to the chest. This has caused the inhabitants of the right bank to be baptized "Black Bellies" (Lao-Phoung-Dam), while those of the left bank are called Lao-Phoung-Khao or "White Bellies."

Tyibal Tai
Kha

291 The men's costume is like that of the Laotians. A few, however, have adopted the Burmese costume, turban and all, in which case they let their hair grow and roll it in a coil instead of having a brush cut.

The women wear a very long skirt with broad stripes running across it which is fastened beneath the breasts. The bust is covered by a closed jacket or bodice which is cut straight and made of cotton or silk [302] of varied colors. Their hair is rolled in a coil on the nape of the neck [301] or is held in place around the head by a narrow band of cloth and allowed to fall freely down the back. Both sexes wear metal cylinders in their ears, like the Lus, and silver jewelry.

[142] The Youns are more robust than their fellows, and also more industrious. The women are perhaps less pretty than the Laotian women, but they are just as friendly and merry.

276 [251] Both men and women chew betel, and also "Mieng" (green tea, fermented and salted). They smoke tobacco in enormous cigarettes rolled in dried banana leaves. [Illustration alongside text here]

The Youns are primarily farmers and livestock breeders. They excel in breeding and training oxen as draft animals.

212 We have seen that the Youns, although they speak the same language as the Laotians, have their own form of writing which is generally 292 used for religious writings. Their bonzes, who are highly learned for the most part, are renowned for their expert knowledge of the rites of the Buddhist religion.

101 Marriage, divorce, polygamy, births, funerals, celebrations and festivities are all the same among the Youns as among the Laotians, except for a few minor differences in detail which we need not mention here.

THE KHAS

619 Before entering into detail about the mores and customs of the main Kha families, we shall again have recourse to the learned work 181 by the Superior Resident in Laos in order to give a general sketch of this race which represents at least a third of the population.

[252] "They are to be found throughout the territory, and are divided into more than sixty families. As much as those who inhabit northern Laos are docile, manageable and respectful, so are those who inhabit the southern part of Laos proud, independent and warlike, particularly the tribes inhabiting the mountains which separate us from Annam.

Hill Tribes

595 There is polygamy among the Meos, and the Meo women do not enjoy any higher regard than the Kha women.

[101] The Yaos. The Yaos have the same origin as the Meos, and are strikingly like them in many respects. Their mores, their beliefs and their habits are identical.

619 As we have seen above, the Yaos are divided into three varieties, these being the Lantenes, the Khao and the Ao-Tchaine.

291 The Lantenes (blacks) wear broad trousers, a long smock buttoning
302 at the side and a turban, all made of black cottonstuff. They wear their hair long and either wound under a turban or braided in Chinese style.

[342] Their houses are like those of the Meos and shelter several families, each of which has its own quarters. They are generally clean and well kept-up.

593 The mores of the Lantene Yaos are patriarchal, and these folk
562 are monogamous. The women are very reserved and do not let themselves be seen much by strangers. They enjoy a certain respect and are treated with consideration by their husbands.

231 The Lantenes are great livestock breeders, and cultivate the opium
241 poppy in addition to rice and maize. They are skilled hunters of wild
224 animals, and each man owns a rifle from which he is rarely separated.

[212] Besides a dialect peculiar to them, they speak Quoan-hoa (a
[198] Cantonese idiom), and many of them can write Chinese characters.
101 The Khao Yaos are less outgoing than their fellows and do not greet strangers with as much good will.

291 The men's clothing is like that of the Lantenes, [269] but the women are garbed in a different manner and wear their hair in a special way which has earned their tribe the name "Khao" (horns).

Over a pair of black trousers ornamented with colored embroidery and held in place by leggings, Khao Yao women wear a tunic which comes down to the knees but the flaps of which are fastened to the belt. This tunic also has colored embroidery on the chest, back, neck and cuffs, and is held shut with wide silver hooks.

302 Their hairdress consists of a coil which is smeared with wax and lacquer to hold it in place and in which a wooden socket is imbedded. A light bamboo framework is inserted into the socket, and over this is spread a red cloth or a black cloth embroidered in red. The women thus appear to have two horns on their head.

301 Silver jewelry, neckbands, bracelets and ear pendants are worn by the Khao Yaos.

805 give a summary of the System in force in Laos.

802 **Numbers.** Laotian numeration is decimal, and goes up into tens of billions (1).

(1) Like all primitive peoples, the Laotians have no conception of such high numbers. Scholars, mandarins and bonzes are the only ones who know these expressions.

[242] [410] Numbers are written, just as we do, in groups of three figures.

Meo

516 progresses at an even, elongated pace, carrying as much as 30 kilo-
417 grams in his pack without even seeming to suspect the feats of strength,
[32] suppleness and balance which he accomplishes. As long as he remains on high ground his resistance to fatigue is very great indeed, but he cannot go down to the lowlands without danger, especially in the hot season.

101 Certain authors claim that the word "Meo" which, when pronounced with a certain intonation, means cat in several Indo-Chinese languages, was given to these folk by reason of their agility. However, we must note that in [109] Laotian the word "Meo" used to designate these mountainfolk is neither written or pronounced like the word meo which is used to designate cats. There is the same difference between these two words as there is in French between the words maitre and metre.

342 A Meo house is built at ground level on slightly leveled ground. The walls are made of puddled clay or of ill-fitting boards, and the house is roofed with thatch or crudely-squared wooden shingles. The doors are made of wood which has been shaped with an ax, and there
[592] are no windows. Often several families live in the same house, and then each has a fireplace to itself and a compartment which serves it as a bedroom. In the common room there is an oven and fireplaces above which objects are placed to dry on a bamboo framework. Behind the house a narrow passageway is left free separating the
[343] building from the sheer mountainside. In front there is a narrow veranda where the horses are kept when they are not housed in a stable built on piles and overhanging the mountainside, as are the animal barn and pig sty, the rice granary and the goat pen. This system has the advantage of protecting the animals from the dampness of the ground, since the planks which form the floor jut out over empty space on their solid piles.

[101] Inside the house there are a few furnishings, as among all peoples of Chinese origin. There are benches, tables, camp beds, dishes,
352 iron and copper cooking utensils and opium smoking accessories, all
356 so repulsively filthy that even the least delicate would hesitate to enter and stay in these hovels, where vermin swarm under the protection of the ancestors' altar.

198 Although amongh themselves and with their families the Meos speak a rather unharmonious language, nearly all the men can under-
212 stand and speak Qouane-hoa, the language of the Chinese mandarins, which is the official language in Yunnan. They can neither read nor write Chinese characters, and have no system of writing of their own.

[76] LAOTIAN WRITING AND LANGUAGE

212 Laotian writing has an alphabet. It is written from left to right. The Laotian characters derive from the Thai writing created by King Rama Kamheng of Sukhodya in A. D. 1283. But this Thai writing is merely a substitute for the cursive form of the writing of inscriptions in ancient Khmer of Cambodia. This explains the striking similarities of Laotian and Khmer letters.

The tham characters are used especially in religious texts, but also sometimes in novels.

Two other writings close to the Laotian alphabet are the lu, whose use is localized in the extreme north, and the yuon, used at Xieng Mai and in the bordering provinces.

213 The Laotian manuscripts written on four lines are engraved with a pointed instrument on palm leaves of varying length pierced with two holes, at one third and at two thirds of their length. The cord which is to hold them together must only be put through the hole on the left side. A bundle of about twenty leaves forms a phuk (pronounced p'ouk). These phuk are grouped in bundles (mat) which are wrapped up in a piece of cloth or else they are put in a pile held at the top and bottom by two wooden boards, and pierced from right to left with a double series of holes through which a thin cord is passed. The two extremities are tied in a knot used to carry this mass.

[77] The Laotian Language

194 It is a tonal language. It possesses three series of letters, medium, high and low.

193 Morphology. The purely Laotian words rarely have more than two syllables. There is no article. The words are invariable. There is no gender, nor number, only generic terms used to define men, animals, vegetables, etc. The generic categories are numerous. There is one used for leaves and all that is flat, another for round and elongated objects, such as trees and columns, etc., in all there are about twenty.

Like the other words, the verb is invariable. Verbal time is unknown, but there are auxiliaries indicating a completed action. Personal pronouns differ according to whether the person addressed is an inferior, an equal or a superior.

[554]

Syntax. Laotian construction is direct: subject, verb, object. The determinant follows the determined. A question is made without